

A SHORT HISTORY OF WATERVILLE, MAINE

By

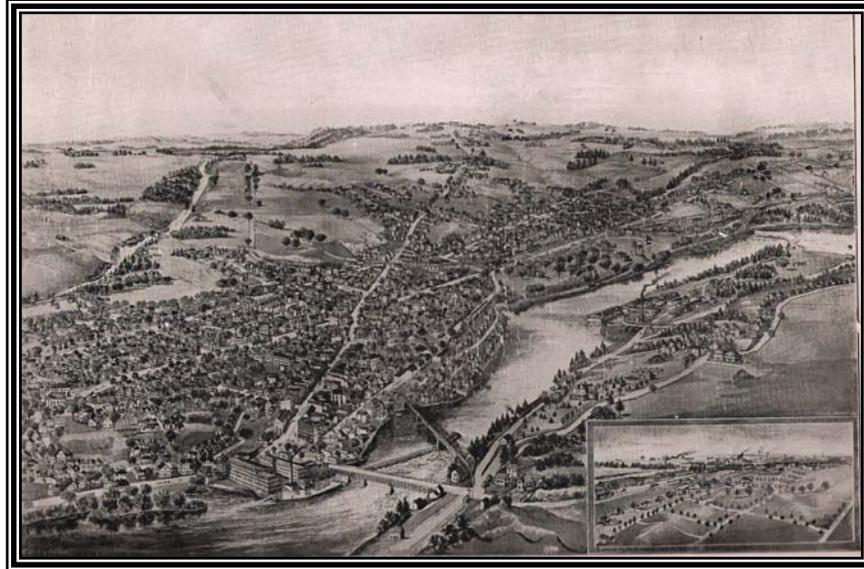
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The City of Waterville expresses its appreciation to Stephen Plocher for offering to write a history of Waterville suitable for posting on the City's web site and for the extensive research and careful writing which are reflected in this document. The City also wishes to thank Professor Elizabeth Leonard of Colby College for agreeing to sponsor Mr. Plocher's independent study which made writing this history a valuable part of his academic experience.

A longer version of this history will be made available on this web site in the near future.

HISTORY OF WATERVILLE, MAINE

INTRODUCTION

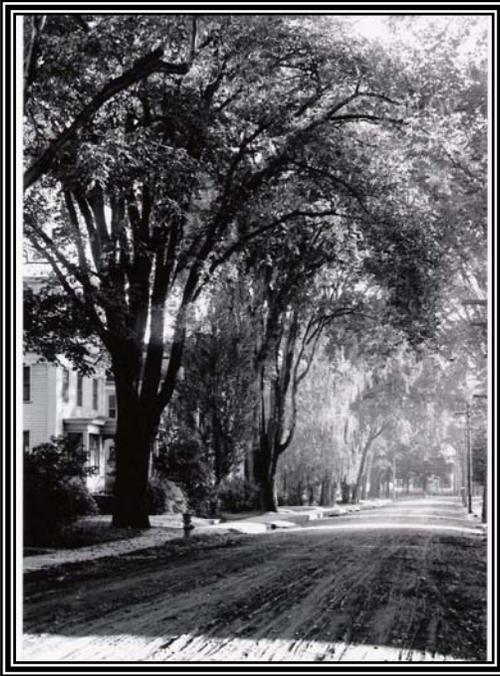


If we were to simplify the story of Waterville to the greatest degree possible, a good strategy would be to look at the city's names. True, a number of important events would be overlooked, but examining the names and the name changes in this city's history offers a unique view into the essence of its identity.

Waterville has a rich history when it comes to names. The city itself went through a number of them in its early days, and these changes reflect the city's ongoing reinvention of itself. The first people we know about who lived here, the Canibas people, called the falls on the river and their settlement Teconnet, or Ticonic Village, depending on whose spelling we prefer. From the beginning the settlement was deeply connected to those falls on the Kennebec River, which offered excellent fishing and eventually great industrial potential. When Europeans took over the area, the community became the plantation of Kingfield and then the town of Winslow, named for the general who established Fort Halifax there. The section of town on the west side of the river, however, grew on its own to the point of demanding its independence, and this area became the town of Waterville. Little is known about why the name Waterville was suggested, besides the obvious river and streams, but it is interesting to consider the fact that this simple name combines English and French words. The town would greatly be shaped by both English-speaking colonists and French-Canadian immigrants in the times to come.

Two final shifts related to the town's name are relatively minor. In time, like Waterville itself had done before, the western section of the town began to grow on its own and eventually seceded, first incorporating itself as West Waterville and subsequently adopting the name of Oakland to establish a more distinct identity. The Town of Waterville soon became the City of Waterville, ushering in an era of bustling industry and lively culture. Waterville was dubbed the Elm City for its many elm trees, and as such grew to be considered one of the more beautiful cities of Maine.

Waterville's other nickname is "The University City of Maine," and the city's two colleges are another example of the city's history of name changes and redefinition. The first



college was called the Maine Literary and Theological Institution, which became Waterville College and then Colby University, before becoming Colby College. The changes mark a progression towards becoming a more secular institution and also reflect who had invested in the school. Waterville's second college began as Kiest Business College, then became Morgan Business College and then Morgan-Thomas Business College—all reflecting the private ownership of the school—before becoming Thomas Junior College and then simply Thomas College. With each name change the schools explored new opportunities, and with each name change the institutions discovered new meaning.

The names significant to Waterville are not limited to the city itself nor its institutions. A more personal level of name changing occurred among the immigrant populations as they came to the city to establish new lives. French-Canadian immigrants often changed their names for convenience, to facilitate

assimilation or because of their own uncertainty about spellings, although their employers sometimes simply forced new names or spellings upon them. For example, the name Roi has evolved into Roy, Ware, or, by translation, King. The Syrian-Lebanese immigrants faced similar experiences, with their Arabic names often unpronounceable to the Yankee population.

What, in the end, is the significance of Waterville's name changes? If nothing else, they show the history of Waterville to be a dynamic one. The city has grown and shrunk, experienced changing population demographics and shifting economic bases, and yet through it all the city remains. The hard-working people of the city are at the root of its successes; they form a community continually eager to reshape their home into the best place it can be. Waterville has been an Indian burial ground, a trade center, a mill town, a regional hub for employment and transportation, a business center, a college town, and a bustling city. The story of Waterville is one of frequent adjustment, ambition, and perseverance. Like the story told by the city's names, it is a story of steady development and of dynamic change.

TICONIC FALLS, before 1754

The area now known as Waterville, like all of present-day Maine, owes the shape of its terrain to the last of many glacial advances roughly 20,000 to 25,000 years ago. Carved-out basins became the region's lakes, and debris unevenly distributed over the bedrock formed the landscape through which the Kennebec River flows on its way from Moosehead Lake to the Atlantic Ocean. Waterfalls came into being where the bedrock was exposed. As the glaciers receded, wildlife filled in every hill and valley.

For upwards of ten thousand years, people have taken advantage of the natural resources along the Kennebec River.

Archaeological sites along the river suggest settlement in the Waterville area as many as four thousand years ago. By the time European explorers made contact, the Wabanaki people were the residents of the area. The easternmost relatives of the Abenaki, whose name means "people of the dawnland," the Wabanaki were diverse and widespread but all spoke dialects of the Algonquian language.



The Canibas tribe of the Wabanaki formed a village at the junction of the Kennebec and Sebasticook rivers. The rivers were the center of their economy, for fishing and transportation. The villagers named the waterfall on the Kennebec River for their Chief Teconnet, and the general area came to be known by that name as well. The village was set on the eastern side of the Kennebec River, and while there were no settlements on the other side, the villagers made their burial ground along a goodly length of the western side of the river, roughly from modern-day Temple Street to the Lockwood dam.

Although it would be some time before they would settle in the region, the first Europeans began eyeing the land of the Wabanaki as early as 1498, when Sebastian Cabot sailed the coast of Maine and across Massachusetts Bay, initially believing he had found Asia. Upon clarifying the geography, he claimed for the English all the country between Labrador and New York. It wasn't long before French explorers countered the English claim, and for many years the two countries each continued to make competitive land claims. In 1604, the Frenchmen Sieur De Monts and Samuel Champlain ascended the Kennebec River as part of their exploration of Acadia. Two years later, English explorers were in the same region, and a failed attempt was made at forming a colony at the mouth of the Kennebec River, the current location of Popham.

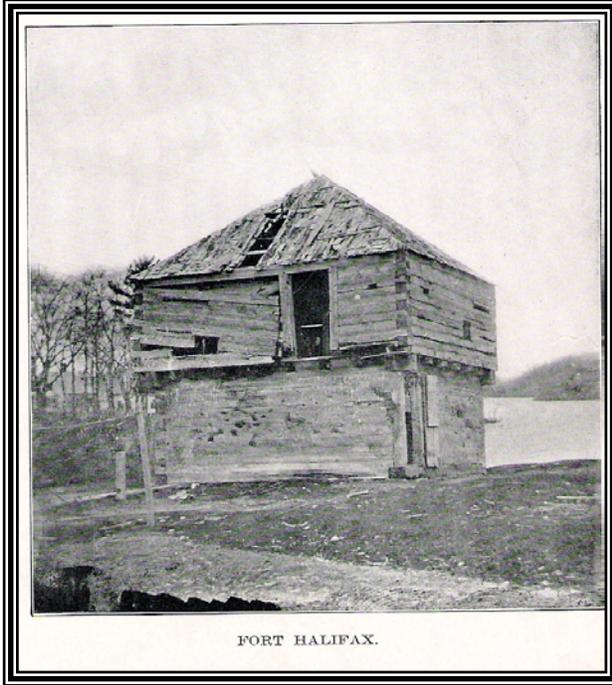
In the meantime, the native tribes were juggling the tasks of sustaining their general livelihood and negotiating with Europeans. Land negotiations involving lies and alcohol were common, but far worse for the indigenous people were the European diseases. Epidemics ravaged the region and greatly depopulated the area. Contact with French Catholic missionaries contributed to disease as well, but also created a shaky alliance between the French and Indians. Apart from the French missionaries, few Europeans actually tried to settle in the Teconnet area. The man considered Waterville's first white resident, Richard Hammond, was operating a

trading house on the west side of the river in 1660, but he was soon killed for stealing furs from the Wabanaki.

In the late seventeenth century, the native people revolted against the Europeans. King Philip's War and King William's War marked the peaks of violence, although skirmishes between the French, English, and Indians continued off and on well into the middle of the eighteenth century. Ticonic Village, as Teconnet had come to be known, was a stop on the journey for war prisoners until the village was burned in 1692, ending settlement by the Canibas tribe.

SETTLEMENT IN WINSLOW, 1754-1801

The Kennebec River was the main route between Quebec and Maine, and as long as fighting with the French continued, the English came to recognize that a fort at Ticonic Falls would be an asset. Following an expedition led by General John Winslow, they decided to build



FORT HALIFAX.

their fort on the east side of the river. Despite Wabanaki misgivings, Fort Halifax was built in 1754 and was garrisoned until 1766 under the command of Captain William Lithgow. The French and the Wabanaki both gradually retreated to Canada. Once the military need subsided, the fort was dismantled, eventually leaving just one blockhouse, which for centuries stood as the oldest wooden building of its type in the United States. A flood in the spring of 1987 washed it away, but the structure has since been reconstructed where it formerly stood.

With the security of a fort and the accessibility of a new road connecting it to towns to the south, the area began to be settled. The community was first called Kingfield, categorized officially as a “plantation.” When the place was incorporated as a town in 1771 it

took the name Winslow, honoring the fort’s founder. Residents established farms on both sides of the river, and the fishing industry did quite well.

Early Winslow was no bystander to national events. In 1775, Benedict Arnold’s 1,100-man expedition to Quebec passed through the town and had trouble getting their heavy boats past Ticonic Falls, encountering the first of the many troubles they would face. Many Winslow men eagerly served in the Revolutionary War. One man who fought at Bunker Hill would become one of the town’s doctors, Obadiah Williams. Another of the men who settled in Winslow upon returning from the war was Asa Redington who, in 1792, with his father-in-law Nehemiah Getchell, built the first dam on the Kennebec River, leading to the openings of saw and grist mills, and a mill for a shipyard on the western side of the river. Development on each side of the Kennebec River grew, and the town became a distribution center for merchandise brought up the river from Portland, Boston, and beyond.



A TOWN OF ITS OWN, 1802-1865

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Winslow was without a bridge, making contact between the east and west sides of the river difficult. The settlement on the west side of the river, then called Ticonic Village, was growing steadily and becoming increasingly independent. After much debate the town decided to split, retaining the part of town east of the Kennebec River as Winslow while making the part west of the river into a new town called Waterville. On June 23, 1802, Waterville was officially incorporated, with a population of approximately eight hundred people.

The community set about developing school districts, a post office and all the proper public services, but soon the development was to be put on hold. The United States was facing continued oppression from Britain, and in June 1812 Congress and President James Madison channeled the country's resentment into a declaration of war. Several Waterville men served in the war, among them the town's first doctor, Moses Appleton, for whom Appleton Street is named.

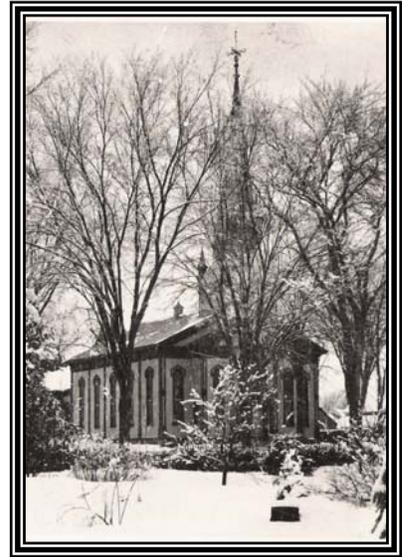
Once peace was proclaimed in 1815, Waterville quickly bounced back to its prewar level of activity. The shipbuilding industry had been growing steadily even during the war, and 1814 marked the launch of the largest ship ever built in Waterville, the 290-ton *Francis and Sarah*.

Shortly after the town's incorporation, a number of Baptists had begun looking into establishing a school in Maine for training future clergy. In February 1813, Massachusetts granted a charter to establish the Maine Literary and Theological Institution in Waterville. Delayed by the war, its first president arrived in 1818, the Reverend Jeremiah Chaplin. Under his leadership, the college's powers would expand and its name would change to Waterville College. The same year Chaplin arrived, he established Waterville's First Baptist Church, which opened its own building in 1826. Until then, Waterville had only had one meetinghouse, offering interdenominational worship.

To build up a stronger, reliable applicant pool, Waterville College founded four preparatory schools across the state. Among them was Waterville Academy, established in 1828.

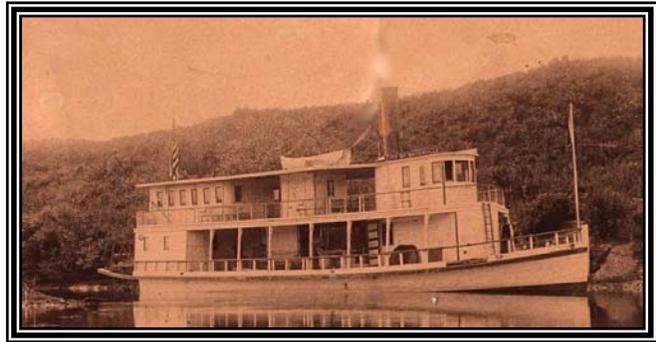
This school went on to become Coburn Classical Institute, which was located next to Monument Park in the heart of town until its main building burned in 1955. In its final years, the school merged with Oak Grove Academy in Vassalboro, remaining open until the end of the 1980s.

In the meantime, a bridge to Winslow was finally built in 1824, and Waterville was quickly becoming an even more attractive destination for traders. The town continued in its role as an agricultural center and also offered employment in the shipbuilding and lumber industries. Short-term workers from Quebec began to arrive, but only after Jean Mathieu came in 1827 did any French-Canadians permanently settle in Waterville. For several years Mathieu's Water Street home served the population of French Catholics as a religious



meetinghouse. A stream of immigrants began to come to Waterville, particularly after the 1830 completion of the Kennebec Road (also called the Canada Road), which offered a direct route between the town and Quebec. That route is more or less the path that U.S. 201 now follows.

In the summer of 1832, the first steamboat to visit Waterville arrived in town. Before long a regular route for passenger and freight service was established, and eventually passenger rides to Boston were available for just one dollar. With its college, Waterville had become a stop on the circuit for lecturers, and later that summer, the outspoken abolitionist and journalist William Lloyd Garrison visited and spoke in town. His speech inspired vigorous growth among local anti-slavery societies. Five years later, the town's interest in abolition would become passionately intense when their own Garrison-like figure became a martyr for the cause. Elijah Parish Lovejoy, a Waterville College graduate and former Waterville teacher, was murdered by a mob in Illinois while defending his abolitionist press.



The town's first newspaper was published in 1823, but for several decades all of the town's journals were short-lived. Among the efforts was a Baptist newspaper produced in 1847 by a man named C.F. Hathaway. After it failed, Hathaway found a better enterprise, and after a brief return to his previous home in Massachusetts, he established a shirt factory in Waterville. The facility, consisting of various expansions to his own home on Appleton Street, became the Hathaway Shirt Company. Hathaway provided a new workplace for women and employed them exclusively, personally overseeing their production of the shirts, and in little time his name came to stand for quality. As for his printing press, it was taken over to



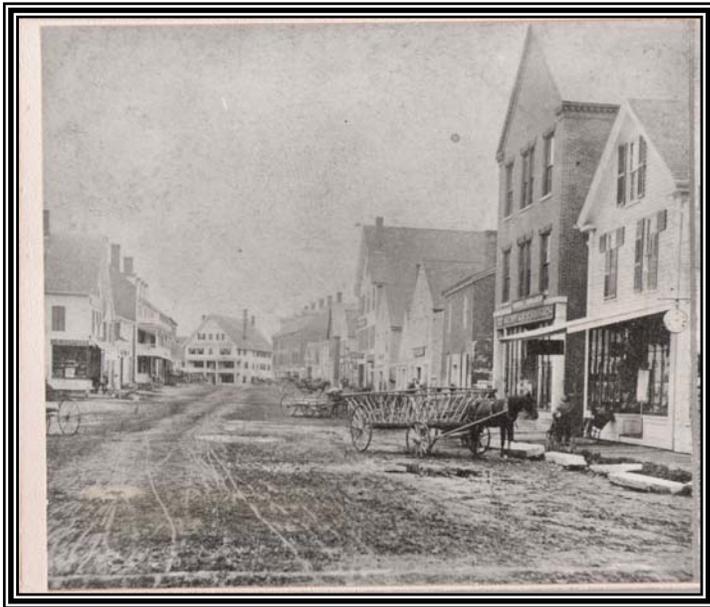
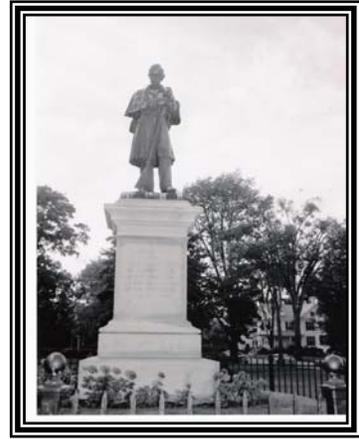
become the *Eastern Mail*, which endured as the local newspaper for decades until the *Waterville Sentinel* took its place.

By the time Hathaway had returned to Waterville, the town was becoming a railroad center. In 1848 the Androscoggin and Kennebec Railroad came to the town, and seven years later the Penobscot and Kennebec Railroad would be built, offering further rail service to Bangor. Providing better service than steamboats and able to operate year-round, the railroads gradually replaced virtually all river travel.

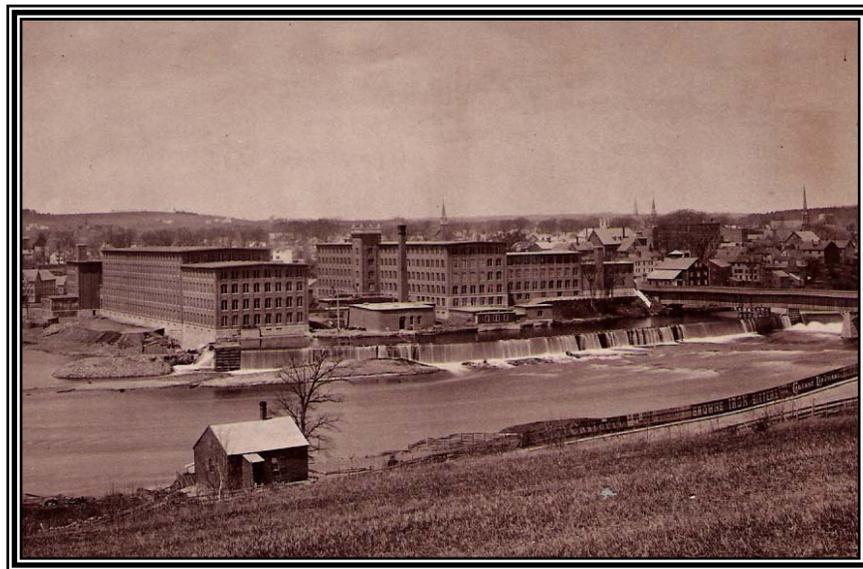
As the 1860s began, a new group of people began to arrive in Waterville. Syrian-Lebanese immigrants, fleeing a revolution between Christians and Muslims in Syria, began to settle in the Head of Falls area and along Front Street, working initially as peddlers but soon

finding other employment in the railroads and mills. They first heard of Waterville in job advertisements in New York. The Lebanese were Maronite Catholics, and for the first few decades after their arrival they joined the Franco-American Catholics for mass.

Like the state of Maine, Waterville did not stand idly by as the Civil War broke out. All told, the town contributed over five hundred soldiers to the Union army. The Hathaway Company made hundreds, if not thousands, of uniforms to outfit them. The town was strongly dedicated to their troops, and before the war was over, the people of Waterville began to make plans for a memorial. The plan was set in 1864, and in 1876 the Soldier's Monument, in the new Monument Park on Elm Street, was dedicated.



Waterville College would be the first college in the North to have a Civil War memorial building, but for a while it seemed the college itself would be a victim of the war. The lowered enrollment and lack of funding in the midst of the post-war recession led many to fear the college would perish. A businessman named Gardner Colby, who had spent some of his childhood in Waterville, heard the college's plight and came to the rescue in 1865. In recognition of the generous grant, the college was renamed Colby University two years later.



A CENTER FOR MANUFACTURING, 1866-1887

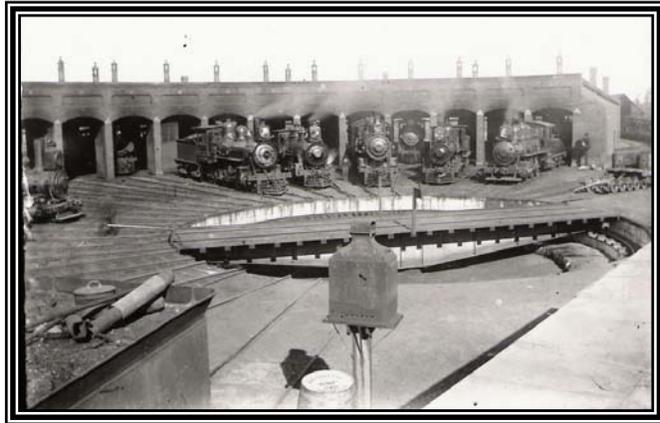
For some time, several individuals in Waterville dreamed of larger industries and a grander utilization of the town's resources. The Ticonic Water Power and Manufacturing Company was formed in 1866 and soon built a dam across the Kennebec River. After a change in ownership in 1873, the company began construction of a large cotton mill which became the Lockwood Company. In less than a decade, a second mill was added, and by the turn of the century the mill complex employed 1,300 people.

With the arrival of the large factory, an industrial revolution was underway; manufacturing offered seemingly unlimited jobs and opportunities. French-Canadians immigrated to Waterville in ever higher numbers, leaving behind their struggling farms and the British government in Quebec for the economic prosperity and relative freedom found in the U.S.

These Franco-Americans primarily lived in the same neighborhood, a place called the "Plains," along the river in the south end of town, and as their population grew the Plains became a sort of city within a city. In 1874, St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church opened, offering a permanent place to worship and eventually a bilingual parochial school. After the first French store opened in 1862, dozens of other businesses and services followed suit: before long there were stores, doctors, dentists, lawyers, even a theater, all in the Plains. The Franco-Americans also introduced hockey to the city. The Anglos in Waterville were forced to adjust to the new presence, and although there was some prejudice in the Yankee population, it was not long before every business had at least one French-speaking employee.



In the meantime the western part of Waterville was growing on its own with factories springing up all along Messalonskee Stream. Petitions for and against another division of the town had circulated for some time, and



West Waterville was incorporated as an independent town in 1873. Ten years later, the town would take the name of Oakland.

The pruning of Waterville did little to set the town back. In 1884, Waterville out-bid Portland and other cities to become the home of the Maine Central Railroad car and locomotive repair shops, bringing hundreds of new jobs to the area and firmly establishing the town as a railroad center.

A CITY EMERGES, 1888-1919

As the town grew, fueled by industry, the question of whether to become a city arose. The state offered multiple city charters, but the town repeatedly rejected them until an amended charter finally won approval, 543 votes to 432, in a town meeting on January 23, 1888. Waterville became the fifteenth city in Maine.

Waterville's first years as a city were marked by growth in every sector of the community. In this era elm trees lined many of the city's streets, earning Waterville the nickname of Elm City. Also at this time, an innovation came related to management of the city's water supply. Messalonskee Stream was polluted where it passed through Waterville, but obtaining water from China Lake would be outside of the city's jurisdiction. Harvey D. Eaton, the manager of a company that would become Central Maine Power, came up with the solution of the Kennebec Water District. A water district could be its own body, serving multiple cities and townships without having to reach an entire county. This proprietary model has since been imitated all over the country.



The Waterville and Fairfield Railway began a streetcar service between the two communities in 1888. The first cars were each pulled by six horses, but within a few years the system was converted to run on the newly available electric power. Another electric trolley service opened in 1903, the Waterville and Oakland Railway; the two railways consolidated in 1911. The fare for the half-hourly service was five cents.

In 1892, the Hollingsworth and Whitney pulp and paper mills opened in Winslow, just across the river from downtown Waterville, providing jobs for many Waterville residents. On the Waterville side, the Riverview Worsted Mill, which would become the Wyandotte Worsted Company, was built a little while later. To ease workers' commute across the river, a footbridge with a toll of two cents was built in 1901. The aptly named Two Cent Bridge was washed out in floods in 1902, but was rebuilt a year later and has stood ever since. It is believed to be the last surviving toll footbridge in the United States.

Serving the general public's education in rapidly changing times, the Waterville Free Library was established in 1896. In 1905 it moved into its current building, funded largely by a grant from Andrew Carnegie. Offering career training for young people facing abundant business opportunities, Kiest Business College opened in 1894 as a non-sectarian, co-educational institution on Main Street. Two years later one William Morgan bought the school and named it for himself. In 1911, John L. Thomas, Sr., bought the school and renamed it Morgan-



Thomas Business College.

In the midst of the turn of the century hubbub, Waterville celebrated its centennial. At least twenty-five thousand people came for the occasion, which included the dedication of a new City Hall building that featured an Opera House upstairs. Following the centennial celebrations, the city's increasing enthusiasm about its history led to the creation of the Waterville Historical Society. A house that Asa Redington built, given to the society in 1924, would eventually serve as home for their museum.

One of Waterville's prominent citizens at the time of the centennial was an inventor by the name of Alvin O. Lombard. His most famous invention was the Lombard Log Hauler, the world's first commercially viable continuous tread tractor and predecessor to tanks and construction machinery. Originally operated by steam and used to pull loads of logs over snow, the tractor was patented in 1901. Lombard set up a factory in the north end of the city, gradually modifying the design and changing to gasoline power. The company eventually fell to the competition of the Caterpillar Company, which had started to develop tread tractors for more diverse uses.



Following in the same innovative vein, around the turn of the century a man named Martin Keyes developed a process for creating high quality paper plates from spruce fiber. In 1907 the Keyes Fibre Company, founded in 1901 further up the river in Shawmut, relocated to a site straddling the Waterville-Fairfield line and next door to Lombard factory.

As Waterville continued to develop and thrive, the city attracted more immigrants. Enough Jews from Poland and Russia came to the area, primarily as peddlers, to form the Beth Israel Congregation in 1902. Until a synagogue was finished in 1905, the congregation held services at the north end fire station.

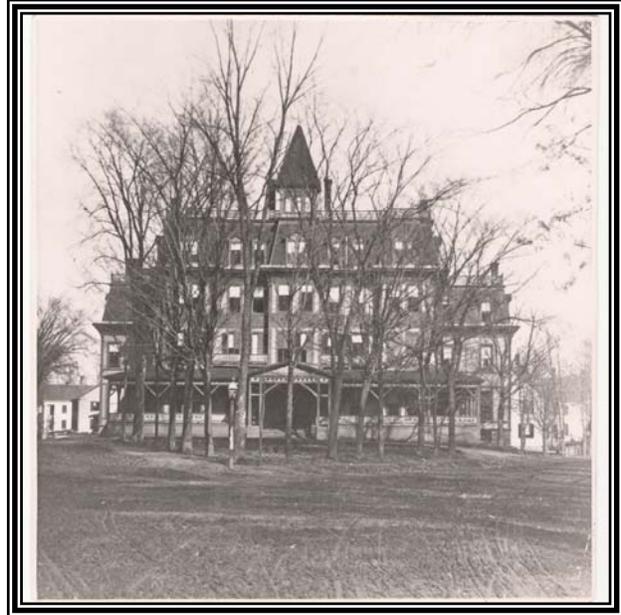


Around 1910, a second wave of Lebanese immigrants began to arrive in Waterville. Although encouraged to come to Waterville by the potential for jobs and the established Lebanese population, this time immigrants were primarily fleeing their country to escape conscription by the Turkish army. The increase in Waterville's population of Maronite Catholics led to the arrival of a Maronite priest in 1924, freeing the Lebanese to worship on their own and in Arabic, rather than at Sacred Heart, the English-speaking Catholic church that had been built in 1905. In 1951, St. Joseph's Maronite Catholic Church was built, in the middle of the Lebanese

neighborhood. The church would establish a parochial school eight years later.

Since the days of the steamboat, Waterville had been a destination for travelers and it became more so during the railroad's heyday. Several fine hotels were located in the heart of downtown. In addition to its new opera house, the city offered vaudeville acts and plays, then silent films, and, before long, talkies at its theaters, the Silver, the State, the Haines, and the Bijou. Downtown more and more stores opened for business, including Sterns department store and Dunham's of Maine clothing, while well-established institutions like Levine's clothing and W.B. Arnold's hardware store continued to thrive.

When the United States entered the First World War, over five hundred soldiers from Waterville enlisted. A young Franco-American man named Arthur Castonguay was the first Waterville citizen killed in the war, and the square next to City Hall was named in his memory.



GROWTH AND CHANGE, 1920-1959

Early in the twentieth century, Colby University, renamed in 1899 as the more modest Colby College, was growing rapidly. Unfortunately, the city's industries boxed Colby in, with the Iron Works and Maine Central Railroad's shops on one end, businesses filling in the other, and the Kennebec River and railroad tracks confining each side. The college had no room to expand, and in 1929 the trustees decided to relocate the campus completely. The mayor at the time, F. Harold Dubord, the city's first Franco-American to serve in that office, championed a fundraising effort to ensure that the college stayed in its home city. To everyone's



relief, the trustees voted to keep Colby in Waterville. Eventually, Mayflower Hill was selected as the future location of the college, and by 1952 the entire campus had moved to the new site.

Despite Waterville's clear status as an industrial center, it took some time for labor movements to take hold in the city. The diversified industry prevented any single interest from developing widespread support. Textile strikes eventually had some effect, and in 1934, a national textile strike led to what the *Waterville Morning Sentinel* described as the "worst riot ever staged in this usually quiet Kennebec Valley city." All the employees of the Wyandotte mill had gone on strike, but only about a sixth of the Lockwood workers had joined the cause. Picketing at Lockwood turned into a mob scene; stones were thrown, and eventually the National Guard dispersed the crowd with tear gas.

Meanwhile the nation was in the midst of the Great Depression, and although Waterville fared better than many similar cities, the times were difficult for everyone. Among other things, the depression led to a decline in use of Waterville's trolleys, and the Waterville, Fairfield and Oakland Railway discontinued its services in 1937. New bus lines were inaugurated but failed to achieve long-term success. In the end, Waterville catered to individual automobiles.



The city did continue to develop, despite the depression and then the Second World War, for which over two thousand citizens enlisted. In 1942, the ten-year-old Waterville Airport took the name of a local star football player and

Colby student lost in the war, becoming Robert LaFleur Airport.

In 1923 Waterville had gained its first modern hospital, built by the Sisters of Charity on College Avenue. In the 1930s, a group of Waterville doctors opened Thayer Hospital on Main Street, and not long after that, another group established the Waterville Osteopathic Hospital. In 1951, a new Thayer Hospital was built on what is now North Street. Ten years later, the Osteopathic Hospital relocated to a large facility that would much later become Inland Hospital. The Sisters Hospital was last to move and expand, but it too did so, becoming Seton Hospital on a site near Mt. Merici Academy in the mid-1960s.



A local radio station, WTVL, was launched on the AM airwaves in 1948. Among the favorite programs was a weekly, 15-minute segment hosted by Ernest C. Marriner, a local historian and Colby graduate. Among the items on his resume were services as an English professor, dean of the faculty, dean of men, and historian at Colby College; president of the city's historical society; and president of the public library. His show, "Little Talks on Common Things," lasted from 1948 into the beginning of the 1980s, and covered various bits on local history and culture. It was entered into the Congressional Record for having the most consecutive broadcasts and for being the longest running radio show in the nation with the same sponsor, Keyes Fibre Company.



Marriner also served on the board of trustees for the city's business college, which was renamed Thomas Junior College in 1950. Following in the footsteps of Colby College, it relocated from its downtown building to a new site, in this case a large house and estate on Silver Street in 1956. In 1962 the school's final name change occurred: upon being granted status as a four-year college able to confer bachelor's degrees, it came to be known simply as Thomas College. The College subsequently moved to its present location on the West River Road.

Meanwhile, textile plants opening in the southern United States had begun to present competition that Waterville's Lockwood Company couldn't match. In the 1930s the factory had reorganized and cut back on its numbers of spindles and looms, but even so when it closed in the mid-1950s it was a blow to

the community. Sadly, although Lockwood was the first major employer in the community to shut its doors, it would not be the last.



URBAN RENEWAL AND BEYOND, 1960-1989

Always a progressive city, Waterville reshaped itself substantially in the 1960s. The last passenger train left Waterville in 1960, and Interstate 95 soon came to take its place. The highway passed through the city with two exits into town, one on Oakland Road (soon to be renamed Kennedy Memorial Drive) and the other on Upper Main Street.

Also in 1960, the establishment of the Urban Renewal Authority, headed by Paul Mitchell, set Waterville's Urban Renewal initiative in motion. Many old and historic buildings were demolished during the decade-long process, including the Elmwood Hotel, Colby's Memorial Hall, and the First Congregational Church. Abandoned buildings and substandard residences were removed, especially on Temple Court, at the Head of Falls and along Front and Water Streets. Many areas were altered in an effort to improve traffic flow. All of Charles Street was cleared to create the Concourse, a large parking lot and shopping complex adjacent to Main Street. Although



many long-neglected buildings were rightfully razed and traffic flow did improve, in the end Urban Renewal left many dreams unfulfilled, earning the process the nickname "Urban Removal."

The shape of the city continued to change in the years that followed. The property adjacent the new interstate exits proved to be the prime areas for business development, and downtown businesses had trouble competing with the chain

discount stores that moved in. Waterville's population declined as people began to prefer more rural and suburban homes, even if they still had jobs in the city. Two large institutions in the center of town, the Wyandotte Worsted Company and Thomas College, relocated to the south on West River Road. The arrival of Dutch Elm Disease was a sad coincidence, which steadily destroyed the trees that had given the Elm City its nickname. Urban Renewal had made Waterville more accessible, but the city itself was beginning to appear empty and abandoned.

Despite the changing face of the city, during this same period a number of individuals in Waterville rose to regional, national, and international prominence. Three of them essentially began their careers as lawyers of Waterville's highly respected bar association. The first was a man from Rumford, Edmund S. Muskie, who opened a practice on Main Street in 1940 before going on to serve as a state representative, as Maine governor, as a U.S. Senator, and as Secretary of State under President Jimmy Carter.

George J. Mitchell, a Waterville native with Irish and Lebanese ancestry to whose prominence he would add, became Muskie's executive assistant in 1962, shortly after finishing law school. Mitchell was appointed to fill Muskie's Senate seat when Muskie became Secretary of State, and he was elected twice to the post himself, becoming Senate Democratic Majority Leader in 1989 and serving in that post until the end of his term. He then became President Bill Clinton's special adviser to Northern Ireland, and for his efforts in negotiating peace in that country he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Beginning his career around the same time as Mitchell was a man from Auburn named Morton A. Brody. Brody opened his practice as a trial lawyer in Waterville in 1961, going on to become a justice and then chief justice of the Superior Court of Maine. In 1991, a new seat was added for the U.S. District Court's District of Maine, and Brody was appointed to the post, in which he served until his death in 2000.

The most influential businessman in Waterville's recent history was neither originally from Waterville, nor did he operate his business within the city. Harold Alfond moved to Waterville in 1943 to marry Dorothy "Bibby" Levine, the daughter of William Levine who founded the clothing store bearing his family name. A few years later, he bought a vacant mill in Dexter, about forty miles northeast of Waterville, and opened the Dexter Shoe



Company. Since 1950 the profoundly successful company's profits have largely gone to the Alfond Family Foundation, an agent of philanthropy all over Maine and especially in Waterville. Countless charities, colleges, schools, and hospitals have buildings bearing the Alfond name, usually meaning the facility is top-of-the-line. The Alfond Youth Center, which opened in 1998

in Waterville, was the nation's first combination Boys and Girls Club and YMCA, and has been considered the organization's biggest and best facility.

Waterville continued to change. The people of the city elected their first female mayor, Ann G. Hill, who served from 1982 to 1986, in the midst of times of declining funding that led to



consolidations everywhere. In 1969, the four Catholic churches, all operating parochial schools, had consolidated their schools into one, which stayed open until 1973.

Another consolidation for the churches came in 1996, when Sacred Heart, Notre Dame, and St. Francis de Sales merged into a single Parish of the Holy Spirit. In the meantime, Thayer and Seton Hospitals combined to become the Mid-Maine Medical Center, which in 1997 joined with the Augusta General Hospital to become the MaineGeneral Medical Center.

A TIME OF TRANSITION, 1990-2006

The end of the twentieth century was accompanied by the closing of many of Waterville's factories and mills. The Wyandotte Worsted Company had shut its doors in the 1980s. Scott Paper, which had acquired the Hollingsworth and Whitney Mill, cut back its operations in 1993. Two years later, Kimberly-Clark bought the company and continued cutbacks until the plant closed in 1997. The same year, the Cascade textile mill in Oakland closed.

About a decade after expanding into the old Lockwood mill in the late 1950s, the Hathaway Company had been bought out, and the parent company decided to lower the quality of the shirts as a way of dealing with international competition. In 1996 the company, on the verge of closure, was taken over by a group of local leaders who kept the factory open and returned the shirts to their original famed quality, but it couldn't last, and in 2002 the factory closed for good. Colby College and MaineGeneral became the two largest remaining employers in the city.



Waterville carried on as always, and some old fixtures remained. The Keyes Fibre Company, self-nicknamed "The Pie Plate Company," became the Chinet Company and then was taken over by Huhtamaki, but the plant continued to operate into the new millennium. Downtown, the department stores all disappeared, but many of the long-standing stores remained in business, including Berry's Stationers, L. Tardif Jewelers, and Al Corey's Music Center. Until his death in 2003, Corey, a local legend and member of the Lebanese community, also led a big

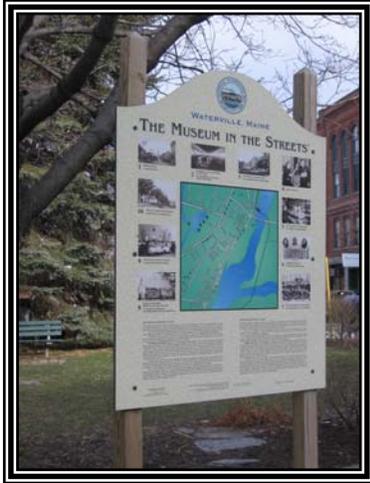
band that played at many local gigs, including the city's Bicentennial Grand Ball, one of the many festivities of the city's two hundredth birthday celebration in June 2002.

The time of transition surrounding Waterville's bicentennial was met by the community's long tradition of pulling together for city improvement. Revitalization efforts were underway everywhere. Since 1973, an organization had taken up caring for the Waterville Opera House, keeping the building in shape and open for theatrical productions. The Opera House regained its former glory as a movie theater when the Maine International Film Festival was instituted in 1998. Other downtown efforts included transforming the Sterns building into a non-profit Waterville Regional Arts and Community Center, which opened in 1996, funded in large part by the city's colleges and hospitals. An organization called Waterville Main Street, funded by a statewide downtown restoration initiative, worked to help promote businesses and cultural events to attract people to downtown Waterville. City beautification efforts were also initiated, including a redesign of the



Concourse parking lot.

Simultaneously, the city underwent a reawakening of interest in its multicultural history. The Kennebec Valley Franco-American Society was formed and put together the “Museum in the Streets,” a set of historic markers and interpretive information along Water Street. Following suit, a Lebanese-American community organization initiated a project of a downtown mural to pay tribute to their past.



New industries and commercial areas also were coming into Waterville’s picture, no longer focused on manufacturing but on services and creative activity. The shopping centers by the freeway exits continued to expand. An L.L. Bean call center opened on Kennedy Memorial Drive. Other economic development was collaborative with other communities in the region: Waterville was the biggest member of a 24-town consortium that established the FirstPark campus, offering space in Oakland for high-tech industries and businesses. T-Mobile opened a large customer service center at FirstPark and other businesses are contributing to the vitality and promise of this venture.

As the 21st century begins, plans continue for new developments to fill in the empty spaces left by urban renewal and closed factories. The plans mark a return to the Kennebec River as a center of the community, no longer for industrial purposes but for aesthetic value. In 2006 a private developer began to remodel the old Lockwood facilities, turning them into the Hathaway Creative Center, a multi-use complex for stores, apartments, and studios for local artists and craftspeople. Plans were set in motion to develop a park and amphitheater at the Head of Falls riverfront property where the Wyandotte Mill once stood, and the city completed an ambitious infrastructure improvement to allow for future residential and commercial development at this site. Waterville as a whole is as alive and strong as ever, with a firm commitment not only to bounce back from its setbacks but to become an even better city than before.

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